



A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Study Guide by Course Hero



What's Inside

👁 Book Basics	1
🕒 In Context	1
📖 Author Biography	2
👤 Characters	3
📄 Plot Summary	8
🔍 Chapter Summaries	13
“” Quotes	21
🦋 Symbols	24
📚 Themes	25
📖 Motifs	26
📖 Suggested Reading	26

👁 Book Basics

AUTHOR

James Joyce

YEARS PUBLISHED

1914–15

GENRE

Fiction

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is told from a limited omniscient point of view; the narrator's thoughts mirror those of the main character, Stephen Dedalus. The last part of the

novel is written in the form of Stephen's first-person diaries as Stephen assumes control of his life.

TENSE

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce is written in the past tense.

ABOUT THE TITLE

The title, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, signals the book is a *bildungsroman*; this word, from two German words, *bildung* ("education") and *roman* ("novel"), is used to label coming-of-age novels. The label is fitting, as the main character, Stephen Dedalus, develops as an artist in this self-portrait.

🕒 In Context

Irish Independence versus British Rule

Though no specific time period is given for *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, it most likely takes place in the first two or three decades of the 20th century. In Ireland the period starting in the late 19th century and extending two decades into the 20th century saw extensive political and cultural conflict. The root of the conflict was the clash between Catholics and Protestants over Irish independence from British rule. The repressive British government had been in place since the 16th century and had dismally failed the Irish during the mid-19th century's potato famine, allowing the death of about one million Irish people through neglect. This tragedy was brought about by a complex web of laissez-faire economics (centered on the idea that the government should not interfere with the economy), the Protestant religious belief in divine providence, and an attitude of moralism that viewed

the Irish in a stereotypical way, as lazy and in need of a good lesson in self-reliance.

The Protestants, who were in the minority, largely favored continuing the British rule, while Catholics favored Home Rule, or creation of a separate Irish parliament. Charles Stewart Parnell, a Protestant statesman who led the Irish nationalist movement for Home Rule in the 1880s, died in 1891 without achieving his goal, having lost his leadership role after being discovered to be an adulterer. Nevertheless, Parnell would become a symbol of rebellion among the Irish for many decades to come, and his ideas are discussed by the fictional Dedalus family in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Modernism

Joyce is considered one of the central authors of modernism, a movement that sought to challenge previous literary traditions such as romanticism or realism by finding new ways to write about human experience. Other major writers of this artistic movement include T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, and W.H. Auden. These writers, active from just after the turn of the 20th century to the mid-1930s, were united by their mission to build literature from a culture broken by war. They were determined to communicate in new and surprising ways, by pushing language beyond conventions and ignoring conventional forms and structures.

T.S. Eliot's poem "The Wasteland" is considered one of the crucial modernist texts: composed of fragments, quotations, and allusions, it communicates the disjointed and inadvertently doomed nature of modern life and forces the reader to construct meaning from its parts. Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* similarly mixed snippets from other languages with quotations and the author's frequently prophetic verse to address issues of importance to Pound, including historical progress and world economy. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and subsequent works, Joyce uses extensive stream of consciousness, a technique through which the protagonist's thoughts and feelings are presented in a continuous, uninterrupted flow. The effect is to show firsthand a character's thought process—and in so doing make the work of fiction seem as "real" to readers as possible.

The Epiphany

In Christian theology an epiphany is a sudden showing forth of the divine. The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the visit of the three magi, or wise men, to the infant Jesus. Joyce used the word to describe a sudden showing forth of a person or thing's true nature. Stephen Dedalus has such moments in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The most significant of these moments is his realization, fairly late in the book, that he has no zeal for the priesthood. There is little warning for this realization, falling on the heels of a recommendation by one of the masters at Stephen's Jesuit school that he pursue the very profession he now seems not to miss in the least. Yet, it reveals Stephen's true feelings to himself and, in turn, to the reader.

Author Biography

James Joyce is widely recognized as one of the 20th century's most influential authors, based on the reputation of four major works: the short story collection *Dubliners* (1914) and the novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–1915), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Born on February 2, 1882, into a large Catholic family in a suburb of Dublin, Joyce was sent at age six to Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit boarding school. However, Joyce's father had money and drinking troubles, and the family fell into poverty; as a result, Joyce had to withdraw from school, and for two years, he tried to teach himself.

Always precocious, Joyce managed to learn a great deal: he taught himself Norwegian so he could read Henrik Ibsen's works in the playwright's original language, and in his lifetime, he would know or speak 17 languages. Joyce and his brother Stanislaus eventually received free admission to another school, and afterward, Joyce received a bachelor's degree from University College, Dublin. Joyce then left Ireland for Paris, with the vague idea of becoming a medical doctor, only to return in 1903 because his mother was ill; she died later that year. The following year he met Nora Barnacle, the great love of his life, and they married and moved to Italy. The Joyces would continue to live away from Ireland for most of the author's life. Although Joyce was obsessed with Ireland and celebrated it through his writing, he was also repulsed by it on a political level, objecting strongly to the Catholic Church's

dominance there.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man was Joyce's first novel. He began an autobiographical novel titled *Stephen Hero* in 1903 but scrapped the material and used its main character in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The text first appeared in installments in a literary journal. After poet Ezra Pound read and praised the text for its virtuosity, it was published as a book in 1916.

Reviews were mixed. Writer H.G. Wells lauded the novel, comparing Joyce's writing to that of Jonathan Swift and Joseph Conrad, among other critically praised novelists. Others found the book perplexing; the *Guardian* sniffed at its "passion for foul-smelling things," and the journal *Everyman* called it an "extraordinarily dirty story of the upbringing of a young man by Jesuits." Joyce's association with fellow modernists such as Pound and T.S. Eliot—writers who consciously chose to eschew traditional writing styles—did much to catapult *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to its current lofty stature despite the mixed nature of its early reception. The novel has proven to be one of the author's best-loved books.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is widely considered to be partially autobiographical, as it reflects Joyce's own upbringing in Ireland. Like Stephen Dedalus, Joyce grew up in a large family with a financially irresponsible and alcoholic father, and he attended a prep school, Jesuit school, and college basically identical to those described in the novel. Even Stephen's close friends through school and university have parallels in Joyce's life. No one can know how closely Joyce's private thoughts match those of his protagonist, but the correspondence between biographical detail and novelistic detail make it seem likely the two have internal as well as external similarities.

The tale of a writer's youthful development would later be a basis for what many people consider Joyce's greatest work, *Ulysses*, which also features the brilliant but decadent student and writer Stephen Dedalus. Stephen's encounters and developments as a vulnerable, complex, and observant individual and budding artist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* form a kind of rough sketch for *Ulysses*, which uses Stephen as a lens for viewing the city of Dublin as a whole, and the world at large.

Joyce lived much of his life in Europe, through the publication of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*,

and *Finnegans Wake*, his final novel. He lived a life of considerable excess and was frequently ill. Toward the end of his life, his eyesight had declined so much he was almost blind. He died in Zurich on January 13, 1941, as a result of complications from intestinal surgery.

Characters

Stephen Dedalus

Stephen Dedalus is the novel's protagonist, although readers' sympathies may not always lie with him. From early childhood he perceives the world in a highly personalized and sensitive way. As he grows older this peculiarity and sensitivity will prove problematic; it will restrain him as a student, particularly as a student bound for the priesthood. The novel shows Stephen's grappling with the warring impulses within himself: the impulse to create and experience life at its fullest versus the impulse to lead a virtuous life as a model for others.

Simon Dedalus

Simon Dedalus is the affectionate but dissolute patriarch of Stephen's family. He is plagued by drinking problems, discipline problems, and emotional problems. His inability to entirely master these issues is a source of stress and instability for his family. Simon and Stephen are close, but as Stephen grows older and must assume more family responsibility due to his father's irresponsibility, their relationship becomes one of strained tolerance.

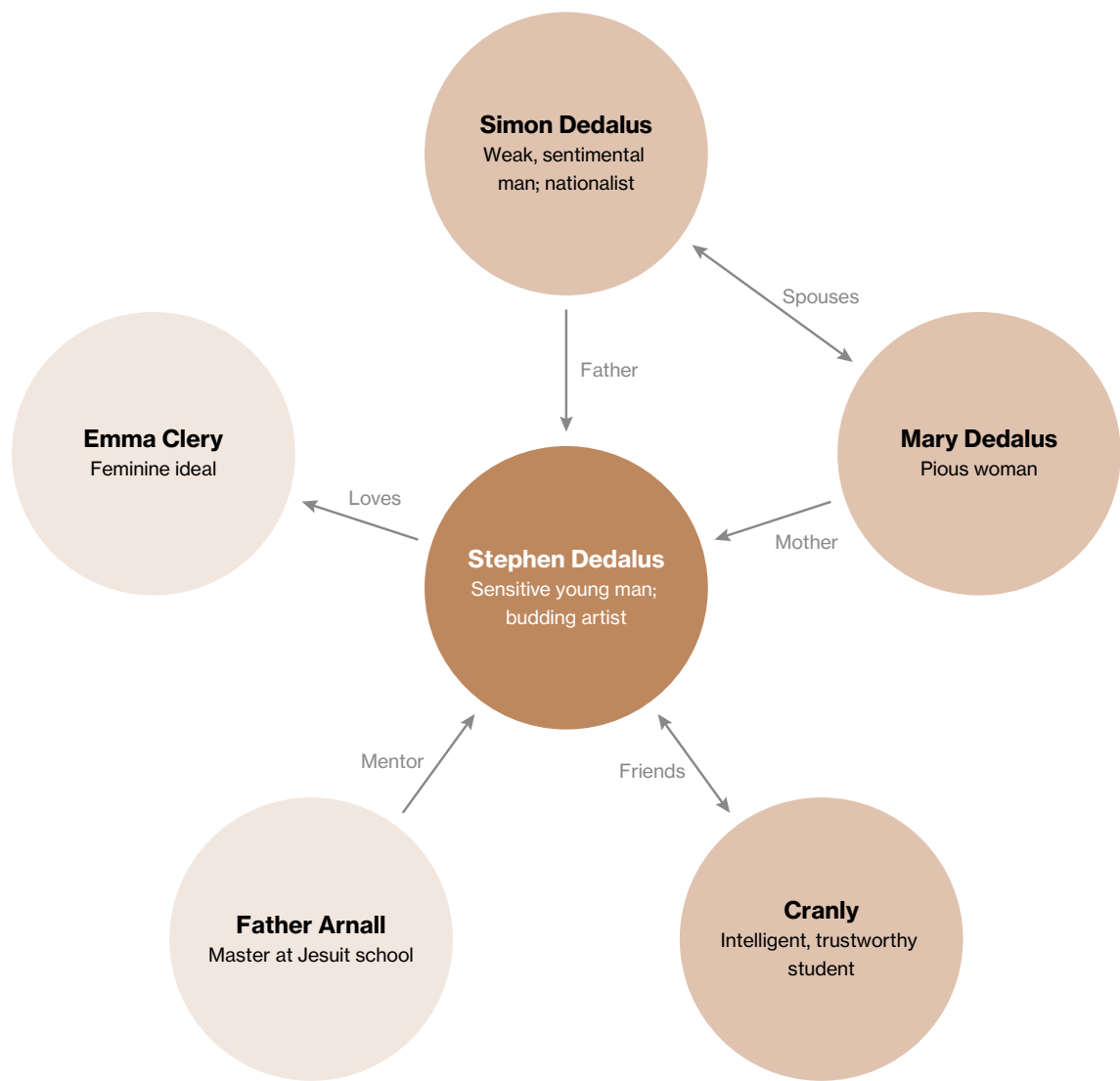
Mary Dedalus

Mary Dedalus is portrayed in fairly broad strokes in the novel. She takes care of Stephen, and early on he notes she has a nicer smell than his father. Mary also attempts to discipline Stephen when his father is absent (either physically or emotionally). In the first chapter she reprimands Stephen for being too forward with a Protestant female neighbor; much later in the novel, she scolds Stephen for spending money from an academic prize too wildly. Still later she bemoans Stephen's abandonment of the priesthood.

Cranly

Stephen has a deep bond with Cranly. The two classmates have conversations Stephen would never have with others because Stephen feels Cranly can understand him. As a result, Cranly learns more about Stephen than others do; he is also more receptive to Stephen's eccentricity than others are.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Stephen Dedalus	Stephen Dedalus is the novel's protagonist. Early on he considers becoming a priest, but by novel's end he decides to become an artist.
Simon Dedalus	Simon Dedalus is Stephen's father. Though he is a hard worker, Simon frequently is in financial trouble, forcing his family to move numerous times.
Mary Dedalus	Mary Dedalus is Stephen's pious mother.
Cranly	Cranly, a friend from Jesuit school, is Stephen's confidante; when Stephen decides not to become a priest, Cranly is the first person he tells.
Father Arnall	Father Arnall is one of the teachers at Clongowes. He is decent to Stephen, allowing him to skip his schoolwork when he breaks his glasses.
Athy	Athy is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes. He is thought to receive special treatment because his father bribes one of the school's clergy.
Boody	Boody is one of Stephen's younger siblings.
Mr. Casey	Mr. Casey is a friend of Stephen's family and a guest at Christmas dinner. He is very supportive of John Parnell and grief stricken when he dies.
Johnny Cashman	Johnny Cashman is one of the drunk old men Stephen and his father encounter when they are out on a bar crawl in Cork after selling their family house.
Uncle Charles	Uncle Charles is Stephen's paternal uncle. He takes walks with Stephen during his nephew's school vacations, and Stephen learns about world events from him.

Emma Clery	Emma Clery is one of Stephen's first love interests. In a prolonged daydream Stephen and Emma are married in a grand ceremony.
Connolly	Connolly is one of Stephen's classmates at Jesuit school. After having a revelation about the path his life is to take, Stephen sees Connolly and several other boys swimming in the ocean, and they appear transformed to him when they are not wearing their normal clothes.
Big Corrigan	Big Corrigan is one of the older students at Clongowes; he appears to have achieved immunity in relation to flogging.
Dan Crosby	Dan Crosby is a tutor with whom Simon Dedalus confers at length when he and Stephen are visiting the University at Cork.
Dante	Dante is Stephen's honorary aunt, and governess, who takes care of the Dedalus children. She is strongly religious, and stands firm in her belief that all people in Ireland should be obedient to the Catholic Church, first and foremost.
Davin	Davin is a classmate of Stephen's from Clongowes, a simple country boy who is strongly nationalistic. He tells Stephen a poignant tale about passing by a cottage one evening and being invited in by a young woman, whom Davin refuses. He is concerned about Stephen's shirking of his duties to his country.
Dean of Studies	Stephen has a conversation late in the book with the dean, who encourages him to complete his degree first and to worry about artistic aspirations afterward. He is another example of failed clergy for Stephen.
Director	The director of the Jesuit school directly encourages Stephen to pursue a life in the priesthood. Shortly after this conversation Stephen realizes he has no interest in the priesthood.
Donovan	Donovan is one of Stephen's college classmates and a highly arrogant fellow.

Eileen	Eileen is a Protestant girl for whom Stephen has a youthful attraction. She flirts with him one day by putting her hand in his pocket. Stephen never makes any advances toward her, however.
Ennis	Ennis is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes.
Fleming	Fleming is one of Stephen's schoolmates at Clongowes. He tells one of the priests when Stephen catches a fever.
Mike Flynn	Mike Flynn is an old friend of Simon Dedalus, yet another former dazzling athlete who has fallen on hard times through drink. He encourages Stephen to be an athlete and times Stephen when he runs around a racetrack during his vacation from Clongowes.
Girl on beach	After Stephen decides he does not wish to pursue the priesthood, he sees a young woman standing in the ocean. The image of the girl helps Stephen to understand his main purpose in life is art.
Mr. Gleeson	Mr. Gleeson is one of the masters at Clongowes. He is known for doling out corporal punishment to the students.
Vincent Heron	Vincent Heron is a friend of Stephen's from school. He often challenges Stephen in matters of taste.
Katey	Katey is one of Stephen's younger sisters.
Lawless	One of the masters at Clongowes summons and scolds Lawless for thinking Friday is a "free day." The exchange makes Stephen apprehensive about the stern lecture to follow.
Lynch	Lynch is one of Stephen's college classmates. His tastes are decadent, but he is one of the few students with whom Stephen can discuss his theories.
MacAlister	MacAlister is one of Stephen's college classmates. He criticizes Stephen at one point for "intellectual crankery."

Jimmy Magee	Jimmy Magee is one of the older students at Clongowes; he runs in a somewhat mischievous clique with Paddy Rath and Big Corrigan.
Maggy	Maggy is one of Stephen's younger sisters.
McCann	McCann is one of Stephen's college classmates. McCann accuses Stephen of being too wrapped up in himself, in opposition to McCann's sense of social activism.
Mercedes	Mercedes is the love interest of the fictional Count of Monte Cristo from the novel of that name. Stephen fanaticizes her as his own love interest. As Stephen grows into an artist, his early ability to participate imaginatively in the action of a heroic novel foreshadows his growing sense of standing as a hero for the Irish people.
Brother Michael	Brother Michael is an academic official at Clongowes. He is in charge of the infirmary and takes care of Stephen when he is sick.
Aubrey Mills	Aubrey Mills is a boy with whom Stephen spends a lot of time during his vacation from Clongowes, playing imaginary games.
Simon Moonan	Simon Moonan is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes. Simon is thought to be a bit of a sycophant, always seeking the school officials' favor, but he is also mischievous and gets into trouble once or twice.
Moynihan	Moynihan is one of Stephen's college classmates. During a lecture, Moynihan whispers jokes about the professor in Stephen's ear.
Nash	Nash is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes. At one point Nash and some other students bully Stephen, interrogating him about his favorite writer.

Prefect of Studies	The prefect of studies, or Dean of Students, at Clongowes beats Stephen's hands when he learns Stephen has not been doing his schoolwork; he says he knows Stephen broke his glasses on purpose despite the fact that it was an accident.
Paddy Rath	Paddy Rath is one of the older students at Clongowes.
Rector	The rector, one of the masters of Clongowes, is viewed as something of a moral authority; Stephen's classmates urge him to tell the rector he was unjustly paddled by the prefect.
Nasty Roche	Nasty Roche is one of Stephen's schoolmates at Clongowes. He bullies Stephen quite frequently.
Shuley	Shuley is one of Stephen's classmates at Jesuit school. After having a revelation about the path his life is to take, Stephen sees Shuley and several other boys swimming in the ocean, and they appear transformed to him when they are not wearing their normal clothes.
Mr. Tate	Mr. Tate is one of Stephen's masters at Jesuit school. He famously points at Stephen and accuses him of having "heresy in his essay."
Temple	Temple is one of Stephen's college classmates. Temple and Cranly, one of Stephen's close friends, have an inimical relationship, at one point nearly coming to blows.
Cecil Thunder	Cecil Thunder is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes. Thunder seems to have broad knowledge of flogging—namely, who is likely to receive it.
Uncle Charles	Uncle Charles is Stephen's paternal uncle. Although he is not tremendously influential within Stephen's life, the two take walks during Stephen's school vacations, and Stephen learns a great deal about world events through overheard conversations.

Wallis

Wallis is one of Stephen's classmates. Wallis is a mischief maker, but he doesn't have the strength to do something truly unforgivable.

Wells

Wells is one of Stephen's classmates at Clongowes. He muscles Stephen into a muddy ditch.

Plot Summary

Set in Ireland at the turn of the century, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* describes Stephen Dedalus's development from a bright young student to a promising clergy student to an artist. It begins with his earliest childhood memories and progresses to his grand epiphany, in which he announces to his closest companions his decision to pursue art rather than a religious life. Stephen's decision results from a combination of factors: the temperament that colors his impressions of the world, his interactions with others, and his interpretation of social forces.

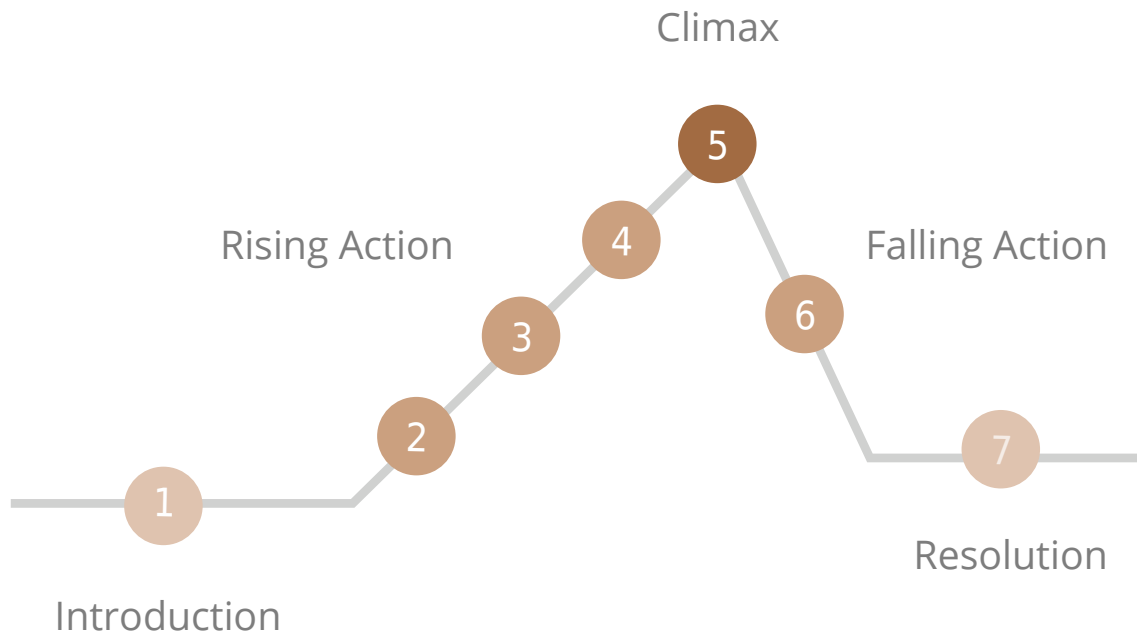
From the start evidence indicates Stephen will be an artist. Readers first meet him as a very young child growing up in a rural community in Ireland and attending Clongowes Preparatory School. He is a timid child who doesn't socialize easily. Stephen has been bullied on the playground because of his small size and shy demeanor; when his glasses are broken following an accident, he is excused from writing exercises by his teacher. When one of his masters finds out, he beats Stephen's hands and heightens the boy's belief that his treatment by the universe is "unfair." Family and friends at a Christmas dinner represent some of the differing political attitudes pervading Ireland at the time, both for and against the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stewart Parnell, and the Irish independence movement. As Stephen grows older and begins to develop love interests, he romanticizes these prominent political figures; he also fantasizes about the nature and landscape of the afterlife, encouraged by the fire-and-brimstone sermons of his schoolmasters. Both tendencies show the strong imagination of an artist.

As Stephen matures, school authorities try to persuade him to join the priesthood. In many ways joining such a large institution makes sense. His family is Catholic and would see a life with the clergy as a fine vocation. The priesthood would

offer stability as well; Stephen's family changes homes several times during Stephen's youth due to his father's financial irresponsibility, so a steady existence might be a relief. However, the novel shows a growing conflict between Stephen's impulse toward the priesthood and his development as an artist. Joyce offers numerous dialogues between Stephen and his friends about books and vast aesthetic and philosophical issues. These dialogues mirror Stephen's inner crisis and give insight into his psychological development.

As he gets older, Stephen begins to visit prostitutes in Dublin. This habit becomes increasingly hard to reconcile with the priestly calling, and his guilt becomes more than he can bear. Gradually, Stephen comes to realize he has no zeal for the religious life and decides instead to become an artist. Joyce presents the last episodes in the book as a series of epiphanies and exchanges. Stephen sees a woman on the beach who represents, in his creatively inspired state, art itself. Later, on the streets of Dublin, Stephen encounters again a woman he loves and declares his intentions to her. As readers last glimpse the artist, he vows "to forge the uncreated conscience of [his] race," or express to the world his sense of beauty and truth in the way he knows best: through art.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Stephen is pushed into a ditch as a young student.

Rising Action

2. Stephen sleeps with a prostitute as an adolescent.
3. Stephen confesses his visits to prostitutes to a priest.
4. A master at school urges Stephen to join the priesthood.

Climax

5. Stephen realizes he has no interest in the priesthood.

Falling Action

6. Stephen is inspired by a woman standing in the ocean.

Resolution

7. Stephen declares his artistic ambitions.

Timeline of Events

Early Childhood

Stephen Dedalus has fragmented sensory memories of his early childhood at home.

Soon after

Stephen gets sick at Clongowes and has to go to the infirmary.

Later in winter

Stephen fails to do his schoolwork and gets his hands struck by the prefect of studies at Clongowes.

Summer

While on school vacation Stephen walks with his Uncle Charles and obsesses over girls.

A few years later

Stephen is in a school play at Belvedere College, a Jesuit day school.

Three years later

Stephen is sent to boarding school at Clongowes Wood College.

Christmas

At Christmas dinner Stephen's family has a heated argument over Irish politics.

Same day

Stephen tells the rector of Clongowes he was beaten unfairly by the prefect.

End of summer

Stephen's family moves to Dublin from the country.

Later

Stephen goes with his father to Cork to sell the family

house.

Soon after

Father Arnall gives a lengthy speech about St. Xavier, which shakes Stephen.

Fall

A Belvedere College master suggests Stephen consider priesthood as a vocation.

Same Day

An encounter with a girl standing in the ocean begins Stephen's life as an artist.

April

Stephen tells Emma he plans to be an artist rather than a priest.

Later

After a school play Stephen has his first encounter with a prostitute.

That night

Stephen makes a confession and feels somewhat better afterward.

Same day

In an epiphany Stephen realizes he does not have sufficient zeal for the priesthood.

Later

Stephen tells his classmate Cranly he will soon leave the university to be a writer.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

Summary

The novel is told from Stephen's perspective. When readers first meet Stephen, he is a baby, forming thoughts and noticing details as a baby might. The family has a conversation, and Stephen hides under the table. The opening passage is a hodgepodge of different impressions and images: seeing a cow, wetting the bed, hearing the sound of a hornpipe and an Irish dance. Stephen's mother says, "Stephen will apologize," indicating the relationship between Stephen and his parents is somewhat punitive and Stephen is held accountable for his actions by his mother. The novel then moves forward in time.

At School: Clongowes

Stephen is at Clongowes, a Catholic boys' school, and is suffering the accompanying torments. Readers watch him half-heartedly playing rugby with his classmates, then weathering some teasing about kissing his mother before bedtime, then drifting through his classwork—struggling to figure out, amidst the daily noise about him, who he is—and then placing himself as a member of the cosmos by giving "The Universe" as part of his home address. Later in the section he has a feverish dream, and it turns out that he is sick—seemingly a result of getting pushed into a drainage ditch by a classmate. At the end of the section he has a dreamlike memory of the death of Irish political leader Parnell. The memory is partly a mockery of the self-dramatization of his sickness, partly an indicator of his family's interest in politics.

Christmas Dinner

Christmas dinner is taken up with an argument about the scandal over Parnell's affair, and how the Catholic Church used the affair to derail Parnell's power in Irish politics, specifically Ireland's separation from British rule. The two opposing sides are those who support Parnell, an early fighter for Irish independence, and those who support dominance by the

English government; beyond this opposition lies the opposition of those who disapprove of the Catholic priests using the pulpit as a way to direct political decisions, and those who believe that Catholicism is intrinsically linked with Irish politics.

As Stephen listens, readers learn he has political interests and opinions even at his young age. He expresses sympathy for Parnell and puzzlement at Dante, who is a profoundly religious individual and has changed her view on Parnell dramatically upon learning of his adultery. As the argument grows more and more heated, finally culminating with Dante's storming out of the room and Stephen's father's bursting into quiet tears over Parnell's death, Stephen's nature is evident as he observes and records other characters' gestures and facial expressions: one person leans across the table, another puts his taut fingers together in an arch, one scrapes the air "as if he were tearing aside a cobweb." The passion of the argument influences him profoundly, as he learns that individuals close to him are in conflict over something complex, political yet personal, and difficult to grasp.

Punishment at School

Stephen listens in on the playing field as other boys discuss an incident where older boys were caught engaging in sexual behavior and were going to be expelled or flogged. He reflects on his associations with the "square," or area where the school latrines are, and on his mystification of what "smuggling" involves. (The term *smuggling* refers to homosexual encounters or sexual explorations that young men sometimes engage in, such as mutual masturbation.) He extends his thinking to examine group punishment for individuals' wrong actions. The boys marvel at how their classmates did it and then ruminate on the punishment they receive. Stephen imagines the physical experience of the punishment: the feeling of cold air on bare skin during flogging, the sound of the pandybat hitting flesh, and the sting of the flogging. When Joyce has Stephen imagine such things, with such completeness and detail, he is indicating that Stephen's nature is one of an artistic temperament, which will serve him well in the future.

Later in the chapter Stephen will grapple with punishment himself, as one of the school's supervisors, or prefects, beats his hands unfairly. When the prefect of studies visits the class and sees Stephen is not working, he assumes Stephen is merely trying to shirk his responsibilities, and flogs his hands aggressively. In fact Stephen has been excused from his work,

because after breaking his glasses he cannot see well enough to complete it. After the beating, Stephen seeks justice for what he views as a slight to his honesty by gathering the courage to see the rector of the school. He receives support for his decision from his peers, who encourage him to report the injustice. When he explains what has happened, the rector says he will talk to the prefect about it, presumably to reproach him. When Stephen returns from getting satisfaction from the rector, his classmates greet him with cries of delight, lifting him above their heads like a returning hero.

Analysis

Readers learn important specifics about Stephen in the book's opening: he is observant, as one can see by the way he spots details around him; he is also able to distinguish nuance at an early age, as one might tell from his differentiated reactions to his mother's and father's smells. He also does not fit in easily, as evidenced by his difficulty at sports, and being singled out for bullying behavior by his classmates. His failure to conform to social expectations will impact the novel's later treatment of the subject of exile. Stephen is inexorably disconnected from those around him and, by extension, his country.

The early smells, visual sensations, and auditory experiences Stephen has will also bear fruit later in the novel. Cold things, such as the feeling of urine in his bed after he has wet it, will always be ominous; warmth, such as the warmth he looks forward to inside the school when he is outside playing rugby, will always be associated with comfort. In these early moments in the book Stephen seems to be someone who frequently questions his world and his role in it. He must turn both over and over, seeing how they work. His trait of self-examination helps to build one of the plot's crucial questions: whether or not Stephen will eventually join the priesthood.

The argument the characters have at Christmas parallels and personalizes an argument raging across Ireland at the time the book was written. The individual's relationship with the church and the role of the Catholic Church in directing Irish politics are central to the argument and will influence Stephen's considerations when he chooses the path of an artist. He prepares for a career in the priesthood and then must ask himself if he really wants the vocation, or if it is unsuitable for his temperament.

The final words of the argument—in which Mr. Casey is crying

"Away with God!" to indicate his support of secular governance and Dante is shouting "Blasphemer! Devil!"—raise the question of whether or not Catholic priests should be involved in shaping Irish politics. A question so hotly debated on the national stage must inevitably affect Stephen, even at a young age, and will indeed be one of the burning questions of his young life. Readers can see how involved Stephen is in the argument, as a glow comes to his cheeks in sympathy with one of the speakers and then his face is "terror-stricken" as the dispute comes to its crashing conclusion. The purpose is to show how Stephen's mind is being shaped and to what extent these early arguments will determine his own passions.

While Stephen's moral sense continues to develop, he also continues building his acute perception of all physical senses, from eating to breathing to being flogged. In so doing his attention to minute detail makes many of his experiences multi-dimensional. Stephen's intense awareness of the way things feel, smell, and taste will contribute to the sexual appetites he experiences later in the novel.

Also apparent is the emergence of Stephen's intensified sense of right and wrong. It is wrong, in his mind, for the prefect to beat him if he is following orders regarding not writing in class. Therefore, after encouragement from his classmates and older students, he takes his complaint to the highest moral authority he can think of, the rector, and pursues right action against the adult world. Justice is restored, in Stephen's mind, and he is satisfied; as his classmates greet him as a victorious returning conqueror, readers also come to view him as a hero who has done something others didn't have the moral courage to do.

Chapter 2

Summary

Home for the Summer

Stephen is home from boarding school for the summer, spending his days with his amiable Uncle Charles as he makes the rounds of their village. Stephen's keen attention to language as it is spoken in a variety of scenarios is one of the indicators of his development as an artist. He also spends time with a group of friends, having mock-battles at various

locations. Stephen carries himself somewhat apart from his companions, due in part to a heightened sense of his own heroism, inspired by reading *The Count of Monte Cristo*, a work significant here for its portrait of a central figure long in exile, which echoes the future that Stephen himself will follow.

Readers soon learn Stephen will not be going back to boarding school. The unspoken reason is his father cannot afford it. This circumstance serves to move Stephen's maturation along slightly more quickly, as he begins to ask himself how he will find his place in the world, both economically and spiritually. As he rides with the local milk deliverer, he ponders what it might be like to have a job, and then, while he is musing on employment, he begins to wonder how his own family will find stability now that his father is "in trouble." During this time of economic instability, Stephen enters fully into the heroics of *The Count of Monte Cristo* and fantasizes about the Count's love interest, Mercedes. This novel provides Stephen with an imaginative outlet: he can create his own noble, stable world where he ventures forth righting wrongs. Stephen's imaginary pursuit of Mercedes heightens his own emerging adolescent urges for romance and physical contact. By choosing a hero to emulate, Stephen again distances himself from others and takes bold measures to create the world of an artist.

Moving On

The upheaval continues as the Dedalus family leaves the house at Blackrock to move to a semi-furnished, bleak rented house in Dublin. The move is caused by Simon Dedalus's financial woes. It is a shock to Stephen, unsettles him, and forces him to reconsider events from the recent past, such as groups of servants whispering in the Blackrock house's hallways.

Forbidding though the move may be, it advances the development of Stephen's artistic sensibilities. Stephen goes with his mother to visit family members, and even joins a birthday party for a younger child. Again he is compelled to observe and take note rather than join in, adding to his trove of moments and scenes. When he leaves the party with a young girl who was also there, he briefly considers the opportunity for flirtation and physical contact but retains his distance from her. The experience fuels his desire to write, and he picks up a new pen and new paper to dedicate a poem to her in the style of Byron. Once again he develops and nurses romantic obsessions, but because he is slightly older, these obsessions are considerably more elaborate and romantic.

Simon relates a conversation he has had with the rector at Stephen's former school. He reveals the staff took Stephen's accusations lightly, rather than with the seriousness Stephen would have expected.

New School: Belvedere

Stephen has a part as a "farcical pedagogue" in the Whitsuntide play at his new Jesuit school, Belvedere, and every aspect of the description communicates how mechanical and artificial Stephen finds the daily life of the school to be. Joyce accentuates the woodenness of the sets, the props, and the student actors' deliveries to convey Stephen's distance from these events and their temptation for engagement on his part. The play is significant in that it reveals the moment when the young artist begins to make the switch from life imitating art, to art being life itself, as the play had "suddenly assumed a life of its own." Indeed, when Stephen meets some of his classmates outside the building before the play is held, they make fun of him in a somewhat aggressive way, teasing him about a girl whom his father brought there to see him. Stephen, however, reflects that he "knew that the adventure in his mind stood in no danger from these words"—that is, the school chums can say nothing to either dissuade or intensify his attractions or, in a larger sense, his growing inner life. He chooses to remain at a distance from even his closest friend, and no longer feels any pull from father or church to be a gentleman or a good Christian.

As with the other women in the book thus far, readers learn only the bare minimum about the girl who has come to see Stephen perform: Stephen is attracted to her, she is very polite to his father, and Stephen longs to be alone with her. Stephen is not yet grown up, so his relationships with women focus heavily on objectification rather than on interaction. As always he fixates on being alone with the girl but gives little thought to what might happen when they are alone, most likely because he has no idea.

A Trip to Cork and Back

Stephen takes a poignant but provocative trip with his father to Cork to complete the sale of some family property. It is clear from the outset that Stephen and Simon are having two wholly different experiences. Simon is primarily interested in drinking heavily, reminiscing about his past at the University of Cork,

and shoving the experience of having to sell family property out of his mind. He takes Stephen on a tour of the college campus, and every name he brings up to a porter is out of date; the individuals Simon remembers have been succeeded by one or two generations. After the sale of the property is complete, Simon and Stephen go out on a "bar crawl," during which various bartenders reminisce about Simon's charisma as a student and Stephen becomes increasingly embarrassed.

Stephen feels betrayed by this trip to Cork with his father. Not only is he unable to fully understand or empathize with his father's nostalgia, he is uncomfortable with Simon's drunkenness and flirting with barmaids, and he's plagued by his own imagination. His feverish dreams on the train of a sleeping populace, and his overwhelming visions of the word "fetus" carved into a desk come to a head as he is concerned that he might progress along his father's life path, amounting to nothing. He calms himself by repeating his name, much as he did when writing out his address all the way to "the Universe" as a child.

His fear seems justified when, after winning a substantial academic prize back in Dublin, Stephen squanders it in grand fashion. Despite the fact that Stephen is attempting, in part, to provide for his family in so spending his earnings, they're still lost. The fear of following in his father's footsteps seems even more justified when, unable to restrain himself any further, Stephen finally travels to a red-light district in Dublin and sleeps with a prostitute.

Analysis

Toward the end of summer Stephen says he wants "to meet in the real world the insubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld." Though he is describing a fictional woman he's been daydreaming about, the statement has much larger implications. The subject he addresses here is, in its thematic meaning, the creation of art. Anyone who writes, paints, or composes ultimately wishes to see their ideas come to fruition and to "encounter" them the way Stephen wishes to encounter Mercedes—to make human, tangible contact. The text could also be said to be referring to the study and appreciation of artworks and literary works, the desire to involve one's self with them by reading them, listening to them, and exploring them. Stephen is studying the life around him, gathering material in his mind, including the vocabulary and speech patterns of his father, family, and associates. This is a

continuation of his close attention to gesture, image, and language from the first chapter of the novel. In the book's narrative structure, readers witness here his sexual awakening, or the beginnings of it; in a broader sense, though, this is a continuation of his artistic awakening.

Stephen also begins to grow up during the summer. When he accompanies his uncle on his rounds, he overhears a lot of talk of politics. As he repeats the words the adults are saying in order to understand them, he begins to learn about world affairs—and, more importantly, to ponder how he will involve himself in the world of adults. In other words he begins growing up by wondering what it would be like to be a grown-up. This consideration makes it impossible, then, for him to indulge in children's play-acting with the same pleasure his friends have. He is intentionally distancing himself from those around him as he nurtures his artistic development.

Much of the narrative here comes through a series of impressions, not necessarily connected, much like a series of photographs: Stephen at a party, Stephen on a tram, Stephen at home in his relatives' kitchen. The cumulative effect of these impressions is to communicate that Stephen's feelings of loneliness and alienation have intensified, and he considers himself both above the frolicking of his peers and unhappily cut off from them. Overwhelmingly, Stephen's imagination calls to him more loudly than any more earthly demands.

The family's move to Dublin marks Stephen's first encounter with the city, a locale in which he will be immersed for the remainder of the novel. The city is a central setting for Joyce and for the modernists as a whole, being the location where the triumphs and the failings of civilization can be most readily witnessed. The urban landscape Joyce initially offers here intimates that what will follow will be a rich landscape for Stephen, full of images which build a murky, potentially dangerous atmosphere: an empty city square, a filthy dock area, a dusky river view, horses pulling a nearly empty tram, which is itself littered with used tickets. Although on the one hand, Dublin reminds Stephen of "another Marseilles," which he has never visited but has read about in Dumas, it also leaves him clearly seeing that he is different, a difference he then embraces.

Stephen's artistic maturation process is in full display here. Joyce offers a glimpse of Stephen's semi-conscious editing process when he tries to compose the poem for the girl: "all those elements which he deemed common and insignificant

fell out of the scene." This act of choosing to preserve only the most essential elements of a scene sets him apart from others. While his peers might seek distraction in a party or a walk through the city, Stephen sees daily life as conscious work of a sort; he sifts through the piles of details for clues and memorable words or scenes.

The second foray Joyce makes into stream of consciousness, or the recreation of an individual's thought pattern, jumps around in time. Stephen remembers various incidences that are, to him, somehow connected. Joyce leaves the connections unexplained.

In addition this part of the novel shows a heightened clash between the role Stephen is called upon to play in the world versus the role he is choosing for himself. His heart lies apart from the dull goings-on in the auditorium, and while Joyce leaves the character's true passions ambiguous at this point, they will crystallize over the course of the book. Similarly, his interactions with his classmates suggest they see him as a dissembler; one of the peers calls him a "sly dog" twice after seeing Stephen's love interest speaking with Simon outside the auditorium; earlier, he has teased Stephen, saying he "doesn't smoke and he doesn't go to bazaars and he doesn't flirt and he doesn't damn anything or damn all."

Stephen's artistic nature is hinted at with his seemingly random connection of his heretical essay, an earlier argument about Byron's poetry, and his fantasies about the girl from the party two years ago, who has now come to the play. The connection shows Stephen as a great compiler of life. Readers never see Stephen deliver his lines here; the lines are beside the point. At this juncture in the novel, readers are merely meant to notice he is performing and he discovers during the rendition of the lines that art can be life.

That Stephen is witnessing the sale of his family property is significant; the transaction represents yet another stage in Stephen's progression toward rootlessness—and ultimately exile. Where Simon sees fond memories in Cork, in and around the university, Stephen sees a whirlpool of nightmares—or at least imagined scenarios over which he has no control.

Throughout the trip Stephen is portrayed as something of a custodian to his father, from the moment when he wakes up ahead of Simon on the train to Cork and sees him sprawled drunkenly across a seat to the moment when he masks his father's rattling of the china at the breakfast following their pub crawl.

Here and elsewhere Stephen is both emotionally engaged in his surroundings and detached enough that he can gain some artistic value from them. He reasserts his independence from his father and the past, his soul no longer capable of "simple joys." His maturity is put to the test when he receives a huge cash prize. Rather than spending the earnings conservatively, he spends them on finery and quickly exhausts them. He follows up this failure with a visit to a prostitute. Stephen is not so much at a turning point in his life as at a juncture where warring impulses guide him in two very different directions: dissolution or the artist's life? Rather than choosing a direction, though, he will remain conflicted until near the novel's end.

Chapter 3

Summary

Obsession with Prostitutes

Stephen now must go through a time of great self-reckoning. What had previously been mere temptation toward indulgence with prostitutes has come to fruition, and Stephen has begun a fairly regular program of visits to Dublin's red-light district. Once again readers see his self-consciousness at work. While he cannot resist the temptation to sleep with prostitutes, he also knows that, as a Catholic, he is condemning himself each time he does it. And yet this predicament doesn't necessarily bother him; he feels a "cold lucid indifference" toward his own satisfaction of his desires. His betrayal of the faith does not even trouble him when he is teaching scriptures to younger students.

A Reckoning

The rector begins to give a lecture pertaining both to an upcoming retreat and to the life of St. Xavier. The prospect of listening to the speech causes Stephen to shrink with fear, either because he dreads facing his own sin or because he dreads leaving Dublin and its pleasures for too long, or both.

Stephen endures two lengthy descriptions of the torments and misery that await sinners in hell, delivered by Father Arnall, the priest from Clongowes who was kind enough to let him off

from working when his glasses were broken. At the conclusion of these vivid sermons, meant to terrify the young men who are listening, Stephen can barely walk. As soon as he regains his composure, but not before he has a nightmarish vision of what hell might be like—a vast, barren plain populated by half-goat, half-human figures—he confesses. He seeks out a church more anonymous than his school to make this confession and then completes his penance. The next morning the world seems reborn and clean and pure.

Analysis

This chapter shows what happens when Stephen's two warring impulses—earthly pleasure and religious devotion—clash directly, and the fact that Stephen is not more concerned about this clash is significant. He views the disparity between the way he spends his days and the way he spends his nights with indifference, which suggests both that he is not destined for life as a priest and also that he is capable of removing himself from his circumstance in the manner of an artist, mining experience for details which may serve a purpose later.

When the rector is reeling off questions in the catechism, Stephen considers them merely as "curious," as if he viewed them more as novelties, in and of themselves, than as points for study. Stephen is beginning to view his world aesthetically, in terms of beauty and art, rather than in the more sin and redemption fashion of his early years in Jesuit schools, and what this means is that moral concerns that might have arisen in the past no longer apply with the same force.

Stephen is wrestling with options for himself. Throughout the process his imagination remains vibrant, as when he imagines hell or when he imagines marrying one of his ever-distant amours. The artistic part of his personality is intact, but it struggles against his more intellectual impulses toward the safety of the priesthood. He grapples with the enormity of the commitment involved and the challenges of conscience one might face as a member of the clergy.

The word *conscience* comes up repeatedly in the chapter, foreshadowing the moment at the book's end when Stephen will deem himself the maker of his race's "conscience." While the pangs of conscience he suffers here have to do with his salacious behavior, they also show how easily Stephen's capacity to feel can be awoken, as he imagines all aspects of

the spiritual realm as described by Father Arnall.

Chapter 4

Summary

The Priesthood—or Not?

Stephen is in the midst of training for the priesthood, having fully adopted it as his life's calling. He finds some solace in the restricted life he's living by imagining the vast relief he is generating for those in Purgatory. He has banished all thoughts of physical desire from his mind, setting aside the degree to which his past desires make repentance necessary on his part.

The most difficult task for Stephen is joining in with common life. He has become so perceptive that he feels guilty about his inability to overcome the barriers between himself and others. As the chapter progresses, Stephen deals more directly with his past temptations, trying to scourge each sense, and finally viewing temptations as signs that "the citadel of the soul had not fallen and that the devil raged to make it fall." If he is aware he is being tempted, that means he is aware of the need to control his temptation, and he will do so.

Regardless of whatever Stephen's confidence in his faith might be, he is still wavering here as he asks, "I have amended my life, have I not?" The "have I not?" is highly significant; while Stephen is striving to eliminate temptation from his life, he doubts himself and his actions. Clearly Stephen has come to an important decision about his efficacy.

Rejecting the Priesthood

This section marks a crucial revelation for Stephen: he will never join the priesthood. The revelation comes as a result of a conversation with one of his teachers, in which the teacher admires the work that he's doing and indicates that he would have a fine future in the clergy. Upon actually pondering that future, Stephen realizes he has no real desire for it. He returns home to visit his family, who once again are facing eviction, only to rush out in the afternoon. He paces while he waits for his father to return from discussing Stephen's acceptance into university.

Each thought, each encounter serves to launch Stephen into fully embracing his artistic nature. Impatient, he heads for the beach, passing a group of Christian brothers, who elicit from Stephen a somewhat painful reminder of all the reasons why he chose not to join the clergy. He shifts from pangs of guilt to his personal fulfillment through his artistry with words. He encounters classmates horsing around in the sea, and notes his differences from them, and is somewhat flattered by their nicknames. A chance meeting of a young girl wading in a stream lifts his soul into rapture at all the world still holds for him. He walks far out to the edge of the tide, enfolding into his being all that the earth provides and completing his departure from the cold spirituality of the priesthood. At sunset he falls asleep.

Analysis

The chapter shows the passion and imagination with which Stephen throws himself into any endeavor, even if that endeavor may not turn out to be successful—as in his striving for the priesthood. Stephen is aware of his imagination, a skill that will serve him well as an artist. He punishes himself for being as aware as he is by taking action to dull, restrict, or brutalize his senses.

Stephen tests what guilt can do for his learning, craftsmanship, and perspective. As in the previous chapter, he can reach heights with his religious inquiry that go beyond what even the Jesuits who teach him can understand. Therefore, after confessing his sins, he has a new perspective from which to see the world.

Beginning with the sordid tragedy of his home life, and ending with Stephen's acceptance of his artistic calling, the last part of the chapter is the turning point of the novel. Stephen's acceptance into university life means the world to him. He can continue his development in an environment more supportive of his temperament, even though his father seems to be making a mess of things, once again.

He quickly leaves behind the clergy walking back from the sea, and easily distances himself from his peers. Stephen's encounter with the girl at the ocean would seem to be a brief moment. However, it serves as a marker for Stephen. No more will he find mother, home, nor clerical life to hold any power over him. Transported by the realization he makes this afternoon, he has been remade into the artist he now knows

himself to be.

Chapter 5

Summary

University Life

As the chapter opens Stephen leads the listless and somewhat unstructured life of a student, and the lifestyle seems to suit him better than the rigors of clergy training. He breakfasts at home, amid pawn tickets and squalor, where his mother chides him for not bathing and his father curses him. Arriving late to the university, he finds he has missed two classes and falls into a conversation about aesthetics with the dean of studies. The dean proposes an aesthetic of usefulness, functionality, as if to imply that Stephen could do well to study it. The dean supports this by encouraging Stephen to complete his degree before he turns completely to art. Again Stephen is reminded of the shortcomings of the clergy. He has escaped from the snare of family, and now escapes from the snare of religion. He proves his distance from world concerns and nationality when he both refuses to sign a pledge for world peace and spurns Davin's entreaties to try to be more Irish, like everyone else.

Then Joyce provides a glimpse of Stephen's new life at the university, and exposes his thinking of what it means for wildly differing groups to agree on beauty. He dodges Cranly's surly negativism about life and entreaties to comply with his Easter duty, even if it is hypocritical, and rebuffs Davin's argument that he should claim himself as a true Irishman and join in the movement against the British. Instead he wanders with Lynch, discussing his theories about what might be agreed upon to be the constant in beauty.

Emma

Stephen awakes after a euphoric dream where he understands life from the perspective of the seraphim, or the highest order of angels. This transporting vision connects heavenly love with the love he has for Emma. He hurriedly writes down bits of a villanelle dedicated to her, capturing what seems to have come to him in his dream, and then he has a furious inner dialogue

about whether he was right to act coldly toward her when he did. He has been in love with her, to varying degrees, for 10 years, and reflects that her flirtation with Father Moran is shallow compared to what he has to offer as "a priest of eternal imagination."

Cranly and Beyond

Later he meets with Cranly and reveals, to Cranly's chagrin, that he will not do as his mother asks and fulfill his Easter duty (making his confession and communion); he will not pursue the priesthood, and he plans to leave Ireland. Cranly feels these decisions negate all the time and effort Stephen has spent up to this point, and he speaks fairly gravely and seriously to Stephen about what the consequences of his choice will be—isolation and exile. Stephen welcomes these things.

Stephen records a series of diary entries describing his last days in Dublin before both his physical departure from the city and his departure from family, nation, and religion. He continues thinking about his discussion with Cranly, now comparing Cranly's parents to the biblical Zechariah, who fathered John the Baptist at an advanced age. Stephen pieces together his responses to friendship, his country, his dreams, and his longest love. He meets Emma on Grafton Street and announces his change of goals, which brings completion to that part of his youth. Finally, as his mother is helping him pack, she expresses hope that he will find answers to his quest for artistic completion, "what the heart is and what it feels." After this exchange, readers receive Stephen's grand statement of purpose, and his call to Daedalus to bring him strength.

Analysis

Stephen's interests continue to build on the foundation of what has been established earlier in the novel. He is more confident in his thinking but shirks from drawing attention to himself, unlike Cranly. When he heads toward school from home, he shrugs off the desperate straits his family is in and turns his mind to those things currently engaging him. He has left behind the clever comeback of a schoolboy, and instead continues to pick up the thread of what now matters to him: What is art for someone who has shed his native Gaelic for the conqueror's language of English? He explains to Davin that he sees his task to "try to fly by those nets [of nationality, language and religion]." In Lynch he finds a dull-witted but flattering listener,

a friend who is willing to approve of Stephen's complex argumentation as they walk through Dublin.

This level of thinking ends with yet another bird image of the young woman he admires from 10 years ago, Emma Clery, whom he met at the birthday party. He castigates himself for judging her penchant for chatting with the instructors, and instead questions if instead her life is as simple as a "rosary of hours."

As the novel begins to draw to a close, Stephen's maturity and development as an artist become stronger and more clearly defined. He has developed habits of an artist, such as the urgent need to write down lines he has dreamed so they don't vanish. While he chides himself slightly for nursing a 10-year romantic obsession, he also engages with his own obsession in a way that indicates he takes it very seriously, and views it as a font of inspiration for his own writing. Stephen, in fact, views everything at this point as potential material. This includes a flock of birds, whose symbolic implications he ruminates over at length.

When he takes his leave of Cranly, he acknowledges he is taking a risk that may damn him through eternity. Both have a sense of loss during this discussion, but Stephen takes a more universal view than Cranly does. His conversation with Cranly could easily be viewed as his conversation with the entire human race. In his new artistic life he understands that he works against the current of those individuals who have not chosen such a lifestyle and view it as frivolous.

The tone here is detached; the form Joyce has chosen here reflects Stephen's transformation from an observant and deep-thinking child into an artist who transforms his world through his imagination. On a practical level the artist needs to assume this remove; otherwise, his unique perspective would be affected. Readers can also see here a shift from the third-person omniscient viewpoint of the rest of the novel to a relaxed, confident first-person narration. At the same time the tone suggests detachment, it also suggests closeness, immediacy. Readers might feel as if they could get to know this Stephen better than the one who occupied earlier pages.

As the novel ends, the theme of escape continues. For Stephen he must leave it all. He is more focused, if no less burdened by vice. The sense Joyce gives is that Stephen responds to an aesthetic call to action. The image of flight—through birds on the library steps—lifts him as he looks to his future.

“” Quotes

"Stephen knelt down quickly pressing his beaten hands to his sides. To think of them beaten and swollen with pain all in a moment made him feel so sorry for them as if they were not his own but someone else's that he felt sorry for."

— Narrator, Chapter 1

Stephen's response to his suffering provides detail about his artistic sensibility. Rather than feeling his own pain as it occurs, Stephen imagines what another's suffering might be like—an early indication of his ability to distance himself for the sake of observation.

"In the soft grey silence he could hear the bump of the balls: and ... the cricket bats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl."

— Narrator, Chapter 1

Two images merge here: one of sport and one of religion. Stephen's mind merges the sound of others playing football with the sound of water falling, perhaps into the baptismal bowl, as if playing sports were a similar sort of introduction into widespread faith.

"The ambition which he felt astir at

times in the darkness of his soul sought no outlet."

— Narrator, Chapter 2

This is a description of Stephen's artistic impulses. As a younger person he experiences them as a form of longing. He does not necessarily have the discipline to channel them into work.

"He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld."

— Narrator, Chapter 2

Stephen's imagination is strong; in his mind he has already met the object of his affections many times. His desire to meet this person in real life shows he is developing and maturing, aware that love cannot live only in the imagination.

"The growth and knowledge of two years of boyhood stood between then and now, forbidding such an outlet: and all day the stream of gloomy tenderness within him had started forth and returned upon itself ... wearying him."

— Narrator, Chapter 2

At this point Stephen wishes for a more mature sort of love. His prior romantic feelings have been unrequited crushes. Now any sense that he might not realize his passions makes him

highly frustrated.

"Pride and hope and desire like crushed herbs in his heart sent up vapors of maddening incense before the eyes of his mind. He strode down the hill amid the tumult of sudden-risen vapors of wounded pride and fallen hope and baffled desire."

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 2

Joyce memorably captures Stephen's passion and self-absorption here. Stephen is feeling deeply wounded over his potentially spurned love. At the moment his hurt pride is all he can focus on; his senses and other instincts are completely clouded by it.

"His mind seemed older than theirs: it shone coldly on their strifes and happiness and regrets like a moon upon a younger earth."

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 2

Stephen typically feels set apart from others, either because they cast him out socially or because his thoughts are on a separate plane. In this instance Stephen feels more mature than his peers, dismissing their concerns as childish and not worthy of his attention.

"A cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul."

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 3

Stephen is beginning to detach himself from the cycle of sin, guilt, and repression that previously haunted him in his religious pursuits when the urge to sleep with prostitutes contradicted his Catholic morality. This detachment ultimately will lead to his denial of the Catholic faith and the priesthood.

"He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world."

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 4

Stephen realizes his mind, soul, and life always will be shaped independently of others. He always will be the driving force behind his own development; thus he will always be a little different from others.

"Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language ... than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?"

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 4

As Stephen thinks about creating artistic works, he finds he is less interested in making the world seem beautiful with vivid, animated language than he is in reflecting it accurately. He wants to write prose that reflects an inner structure as it

reveals itself to him, delaying the full impact until the "periodic prose," or end.

*"Where was his boyhood now?
Where was the soul that had hung
back from her destiny, to brood
alone upon the shame of her
wounds and in her house of
squalor and subterfuge to queen it
in faded cerements and in wreaths
that withered at the touch?"*

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 4

Stephen looks back at his earlier self, at his earlier beliefs, and wonders where his religious aspirations have gone. Viewed from his new mature perspective, they seem to him utterly without vitality.

*"When the soul of a man is born in
this country there are nets flung at
it to hold it back from flight. You
talk to me of nationality, language,
religion. I shall try to fly by those
nets."*

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 5

Stephen believes Irish citizens have no freedom of any kind. Irish society, with its intertwining of church and state, seems to him designed to hold people back, and Stephen is expressing his determination to preserve his personal freedom.

*"The artist, like the God of
creation, remains within or behind*

*or beyond or above his handiwork,
invisible, refined out of existence,
indifferent, paring his fingernails."*

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 5

Stephen presents his vision of an aesthetic in which the artwork results from tremendous craft but seems effortless and bears no mark of the artist's personality. This is not the same as saying the work is cold or without character; Joyce believes modernist work has to rise above confessional or merely narrative impulses.

*"He had told himself bitterly as he
walked through the streets that
she was a figure of the
womanhood of her country, a bat-
like soul waking to the
consciousness of itself in
darkness and secrecy and
loneliness."*

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 5

Stephen expresses his rage over unrequited affection, but he inadvertently expresses his complex and conflicting attitude toward women as well. Stephen considers the subject of his outburst representative of female identity in Ireland.

*"Welcome, O life, I go to encounter
for the millionth time the reality of
experience and to forge in the
smithy of my soul the uncreated
conscience of my race."*

— Stephen Dedalus, Chapter 5

Stephen sets a twofold mission for himself. Not only will he immerse himself in the world around him and make its details and impressions the subject of his work, but he also will create, through the heat of his imagination, a new perspective for the Irish.

Symbols

Colors

Opposing colors, particularly maroon and green, represent opposites or opposing views. One of the earliest examples of color opposition occurs at Clongowes when Stephen is very young. As he sits in class as part of a team named after the War of the Roses, he struggles to solve a math problem to please his teacher. However, his mind wanders to thoughts of roses standing out against green grass. After he abandons any thought of doing his math problem, he muses there can be no such thing as a green rose.

Joyce also makes use of the contrast between white and black or light and dark as a current that runs through the book. There are multiple examples of black or darkness as negative: brothels and the shadows Stephen sees with his broken glasses, for example. In contrast, white or light is positive, such as Eileen's ivory hands.

Stephen Dedalus

Stephen's last name recalls the ancient Greek myth of Daedalus, a story of aspiration. Daedalus was a great builder and thinker. One of his most famous creations was a labyrinth, created for King Minos of Crete to imprison the monstrous Minotaur. The labyrinth was so complicated Daedalus himself had trouble finding his way within it. King Minos was infuriated after the hero Theseus solved the labyrinth and killed the Minotaur; the king subsequently locked Daedalus and his son

in a dark tower. Daedalus built wings from feathers and wax for himself and Icarus so they could fly out of prison.

After some careful planning, the father and son took flight. Soon afterward Icarus, against his father's direct warning and flaunting the gods' powers, flew too close to the sun and died after the sun melted his wax wings. Embedded in Stephen's character is the risk he will end much like Icarus through his flaunting of religion, family, and nationalism.

The image of Daedalus and Icarus, recalls, as well, the symbolism of birds. In the novel birds act as Daedalus's wings, representing flights of the imagination and his upcoming flight into exile. Stephen sees birds when he is musing on a complicated idea or question. Birds provide a distraction for him and also symbolize the inner movement of his thoughts; he is flying away from his task because—although he doesn't realize it yet—he finds the work abhorrent. One of the most prolonged meditations on birds as harbingers of exile occurs in Chapter 5, just before Stephen is about to tell his classmate Cranly he has decided not to pursue the priesthood; he suggests here that the birds might also represent "departure" or "solitariness." Stephen calls on Daedalus for strength as he stands on the brink of leaving Ireland for good to develop his artistic life.

Stephen shares his first name with the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, who was stoned to death after being falsely accused of blasphemy (speaking negatively about God). The name suggests Joyce's character suffers as a result of his strong faith and is willing to die for it. This is certainly true of Stephen when he initially commits himself to the Catholic Church and its teachings. Later, the meaning shifts, as he dedicates himself to art, which leads him to leave behind all that created him: family, Ireland, and his faith.

Wading Girl

Toward the end of the book, Stephen bolts from his family's house and strides through the streets of Dublin, finally finding himself at the ocean. There he sees a girl standing in the waves, "as delicate as a crane." The girl is wholly perfect for this moment; her appearance marks Stephen's commitment to art. She is a muse who contains within her being all of Stephen's dreams. Stephen's feeling when he looks at her is

the same feeling artists have when they are inspired: elation combined with a desire to make a great work. So the wading girl symbolizes for him the artistic ideal, the hunger within every artist to create a perfect representation of an artistic vision.

Writing

Throughout the novel, the act of writing is linked to rebellion and Stephen's awareness of his unique vision. One of the very first instances of this occurs in the first chapter, when readers learn Stephen has written an elaboration on his name and address in one of his textbooks, beginning with his name and ending with "The Universe" as his location. Though playful the gesture indicates an impulse to see his place in the world as inclusive—an impulse that will become more prevalent as Stephen gets older.

Themes

Inspiration

Throughout the novel, Stephen Dedalus seeks artistic inspiration wherever he can find it: in brothels, gutters, the natural world, his classroom, friendships, and the depths of his own nightmares. He doesn't always realize he is looking for inspiration; he finds himself driven toward certain impressions, or ways of viewing the world and doesn't necessarily think of them as linked to artistic pursuits. For instance, when he is outside at recess in Clongowes, he longs to be lying in front of a huge, warm fire, where he can continue his close observations, indicating that he is aware that his nature is different from his peers. Only as he achieves maturity does he shift from a focus on religious inspiration toward an aesthetic one, using his observations of language and life to create art.

Inner Conflict

Looming throughout the first half of the novel is the question of Stephen's vocation. Should he pursue the priesthood—a choice society would view as wise—or will he follow his spirit's calling and become a writer? His master at the Jesuit school believes Stephen is well suited for the priesthood. Throughout the novel, Stephen certainly demonstrates an understanding of guilt, as when he has a nightmarish vision of the afterlife as an unbearably hot, dank plain populated by half-human, half-goat figures. However, just as often, he lets his mind wander and writes poems or records impressions for them. Stephen's inner conflict plays out in the exaggerated way he imagines punishment for his sins; in the torture he feels when his superiors in academic institutions speak of rigorous virtue—as when Father Arnall speaks about Sebastian; and in the drive he uses to push himself forward after he makes his final decision. His impassioned walk to the sea near the novel's end is as much an attempt at escape as a reaction to profound restlessness.

Spiritual Homelessness

Having or lacking a home is an important theme throughout the novel. Home means several things to Stephen. In the literal sense his family has no steady home. Because of Simon's financial irresponsibility, the family must continually pack up and move from place to place. Similarly, Stephen must change schools and academic situations. In a broader, more symbolic sense, Stephen is without a path, so he cannot feel at home in the world. A path—the priesthood—has offered itself to him, but Stephen does not feel entirely comfortable following it, so he chooses instead to leave it, as a first step toward his own exile. He wanders literally through the back alleys of Dublin and spiritually through the twists and turns of his own intentions. The novel's ending can be seen as his acceptance of exile, as a sort of homecoming, then, regardless of whatever insecurity an artist's life might offer. Because Stephen feels confident in his decision, he is more completely at rest.

Motifs

Father Figures

Viewed from one perspective, the novel is full of father figures. Simon Dedalus, Stephen's biological father, becomes a deteriorating image of family. He and Stephen are close, but Stephen clearly recognizes his father's flaws: Simon's drinking, long-windedness, social flattery, and fiscal irresponsibility. Stephen's masters and teachers at his various schools also serve as sources of familial warmth, either disciplining Stephen or indicating possible life paths to him, as when the rector at Stephen's Jesuit school suggests strongly that he join the priesthood.

Quotations

Joyce uses literary quotations throughout the novel. Sometimes they are a reference to Stephen's early sincere prayers, and later they poke fun at the seriousness of university work. They also serve as a reminder that Stephen Dedalus's truest love is for the written word, even though he begins a life in the priesthood.

One of the earliest quotations in the book is a set of lines from Stephen's spelling book at Clongowes, beginning "Wolsey died in Leicester Abbey"; Stephen recognizes the words are "like poetry" because his artistic sensibility is struck by their beauty despite their purpose to teach spelling. Later, when he is at the Jesuit school and is reading a Latin passage out loud, he "[lulls] his conscience to its music," as often the meaning of words is far less important to him than their sound.

Joyce juxtaposes popular music of the time with the scholarly quotations. Traditional Irish song manifests the draw of nationality for Stephen, as the words stir love in his heart. Near the very end of the book, Joyce includes a William Blake quotation about the death of a character named William Bond. Stephen cries inwardly, "Alas, poor William!" in sympathy for William Bond and in empathy with William Blake; he also alludes to the famous cry, "Alas, poor Yorick," from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—a cry Hamlet utters while staring at a dead man's skull. Words from across time stir Stephen's soul as he gathers them in preparation for his exile as an artist.

Suggested Reading

Beja, Morris. *James Joyce: A Literary Life*. N.p.: Ohio State UP, 1992. Print.

Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford UP, 1983. Print.

Levin, Harry. *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*. New York: New Directions, 1960. Print.

Potts, Willard. *Joyce and the Two Irelands*. Austin: U of Texas, 2010. Print.

Wollaeger, Mark A. *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.